Traditions and innovations in the ceremonial life of the German diaspora of Tashkent (the example of weddings)

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ABSTRACT

This paper makes investigations on the Traditions and innovations in the ceremonial life of the German diaspora of Tashkent. It takes the example of weddings to mak theoritical analyses as the whole. Finally, research concludes with major points of the German diaspora of Tashkent.

Keywords: Tradition, innovations, ceremonial life, German diaspora, Tashkent, weddings.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problems concerning the German diaspora were investigated by foreign and our scientists¹. It should be noted that all these writings are mostly devoted to the socio-political life of the Germans.

There are also special writings devoted to the marriage issues and the German family as well. In her writings, T. Filimonova² gives a complete description of the traditional wedding rituals of Germans. At the same time it should be noted that few studies are available regarding the German diaspora's wedding ceremonies. This includes writings of P.K. Galler³, V.S.Tashkalova, S.A. Rublevskaya, T.B. Smirnova⁴, T. Filimonova⁵, and Shishkin-Fisher. The T.Filimonova's findings has a ethnographic character. On the basis of ethnographic and ethnosociologic data, she analyzes the influence of political, religious, economic factors environment on the ethnocultural development of the German population.

Despite the existing literature on the history and culture of the Germans there are no special scientific studies on family and family relations, rituals and customs of the German population of Uzbekistan.

In general, the wedding ceremonies paint a striking picture of the national family life that has developed in the distant past. Founding a family, marriage is an important event in human life and in turn it is accompanied by a host of special features and ceremonies among the Germans. The traditional German wedding ceremony is a specific ritual complex with full of various folk genres: songs of the bride's farewell ceremonies, religious songs, dance music, games of mummers and other acts. The

¹ Госс Э. Автономная социалистическая республика немцев Поволжья. Немецкая деревня как она и есть.; Гульчак М. Итоги и задачи диалектического и этнографического изучения немцев СССР; В.М Жирмунского, "К вопросу о выходцах из Германии в Средней Азии" А.М. Матвеева, "История появления и расселения немцев на территории Узбекистана", «К истории немецкой диаспоры Туркестана» Д. Иноятовой, Рублевская С.А. Календарная обрядность немцев Западной Сибири конца XIX - XX вв. - М.: Готика, 2000. - 136 с; К характеристике календарных праздников немцев Западной Сибири // Немцы Сибири: история и современность: Материалы международной научно-практической конференции. - Омск, 1995. - Ч. 2. - С. 15-19; Миграционная подвижность немецкого населения Омской области // Миграционные процессы среди российских немцев: исторический аспект. -М, 1998.-С.423 426; Бруль В. И. Депортированные народы в Сибири (1935—1965 гг.). Сравнительный анализ // Наказанный народ: репрессии против российских немцев. — М., 1999. С. 101;Мерц В. Проблемы этнокультурного развития немцев Казахстана. //Интернет, Общественное объединение немцев Павлоларской области.

 $^{^2}$ Филимонова Т.Д. Немцы // Брак у народов Западной и Южной Европы. -М., 1989.-С. 5-43; Она же: Об этнокультурном развитии немцев СССР // Советская этнография. - 1986. - № 4. - С. 100-111; Она же: Тенденции этнического развития немцев СССР // Этнокультурные процессы в национально-смешанной среде. — М., 1989. - С. 7-29.

³ Галлер П.К. Воспоминания. Быт немцев-колонистов в 60-х годах XIX ст. Саратов, 1927.

⁴ Рублевская С.А., Смирнова Т.Б. Традиционная обрядность немцев Сибири. -Омск, 1998.-154 с.

⁵ Филимонова Т.Д. Об этнокультурном развитии немцев СССР // Советская этнография. - 1986. - № 4. - С. 100-111; Она же: Тенденции этнического развития немцев СССР // Этнокультурные процессы в национально-смешанной среде. — М., 1989. - С. 7-29.

reproduction of culture has its own characteristics in the context of migrations over long distances and with the long-term existence of the diaspora in new conditions and in a different national environment⁶.

In Germans, like in most other nations, the whole complex of wedding ceremonies can be divided into three parts: pre-wedding ceremonies and customs, the wedding itself and post-marriage ceremonies.

In the past, pre-ritual ceremonies and customs played a significant role. The society was divided into closed class groups and communication between girls and boys was strictly limited due to family and community settings. The meaning of pre-marriage customs was to reach agreement on the marriage of both parties.

The best age for weddings was considered the period from 18 to 25 years. In the Mennonites, the marriage age was slightly higher - 22 - 27 years. In doing so, nobody's ever accused girls who did not marry. According to a survey conducted among the Germans in Tashkent, the preferred age for marriage is traditionally for girls 17–20 years old, this age was noted by 54.5% of respondents, for young men 23–25 years old - 54.2%. Now the picture, as for the main mass, is rather different. Marriages are made upon attaining any status at the age of about 30 years. Quantitative data show that 42.9% of the respondents indicated a preferred age for girls –23–25 years old, and 38.1% for boys – 23-30 years old.

Traditionally, there were prohibitions on marriage only between close relatives - parents and children, godparents and children and siblings. Marriages between cousins and sisters were allowed. In modern times, marriages between cousins, especially in small towns, where a fairly close German diaspora has been formed, are not uncommon. According to the survey, 87.2% of respondents noted that marriage between close relatives is not allowed, also 51.3% noted that marriage between distant relatives is also not allowed, but 38.5% said that they are rarely allowed.

As P.K. Haller writes, there were no bans on marriage between Germans and people of other nationalities or other faiths (until the 1930s). All were married in their village or took brides from nearby neighboring villages. The Mennonites had such a ban. Today, only 10.3% of respondents noted that nationality plays a decisive role in choosing a marriage partner, however, 79.5% of respondents positively relate to inter-ethnic marriages and only 20.5% answered negatively. This kind of attitude towards interethnic marriages can be explained by the fact that many of respondents themselves are children of mixed marriages. Another reason for positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriage is that 75% of respondents with a family are have a mixed marriage whereas only 25.0% are not mixed. If we consider mixed marriages, it turns out that 35.9% are mixed marriages with representatives of Russian nationality If we look at it from a gender perspective, 76.3% of respondents answered that they could have given their daughter to representatives of different nationality and only 18.4% answered negatively. Also, 81.6% could marry a son to a representative of another nationality, 15.8% are not. 25.6% of these respondents would prefer to marry their son to a representative of Russian nationality, and 23.1% would marry a daughter for them.

In accordance with the tradition, the issue of choosing a marriage partner was decided by parents, but with the consent of the young. The initiative in choosing a pair was shown by men, for a girl it was considered indecent. The 83.4% of respondents believe that young people themselves played the decisive role, 16.6% of respondents noted the crucial role of parents. Only 60.6% of respondents did not have complications with their parents in the process of choosing their own marriage partner.

According to interviews, acquaintances between young people in many cases are random if the relationship did not develop since the childhood (at school or by neighborhood). This is confirmed by the quantitative data where 92.3% of respondents believe that acquaintances happen by chance and only 7.7% of them believe that these acquaintances are organized specifically. According to informants, the choice of the marriage partner most often came due to the love between young people, but parental consent was also important⁷. The survey showed similar data: respondents for the decisive role of love in choosing a marriage partner - 66.7%, for the second place education - 23.1%. The 94.9% of respondents, who consider themselves as Christians rated the religious factor for choosing a marriage partner as follows: 28.9% indicated that it is important in this situation, 65.7% believe that the religious factor has not a big role.

⁶ Смирнова Т.Б. Особенности развития обрядности в диаспоре (на примере свадебных обрядов немцев Сибири) // Особенности развития обрядности в диаспоре.

According to traditional wedding rituals, the pre-marriage relations of the young people did not last long, the wedding was held after 3-4 weeks following a agreement. According to the informants of middle age, premarital neutral relations are perceived as a normal feature. These relationships assist to identify the common interests of young people and could last from six months and more. The 89.7% of respondents treat neutral premarital relations positively and only 2.6% negatively. Длительность же сегодняшних добрачных отношений можно увидеть в нижеследующей таблице: The duration of today's premarital relations can be seen in the table below:

period	up to 6 months	up to one year	up to 3 years	more	than	3
				years		
%	22,7	27,3	31,8	18,2		

The next stage before the wedding ceremonies was matchmaking. In traditional ritual, matchmaking (Werbung, Freie) played a very important role, since it ended with the principle agreement of the parties to the marriage. The bride or her parents invite the matchmakers and as usual it is a people with an experience in matchmaking. As P.Galler writes, mainly the bridegroom's father or some of the close relatives were as representatives, but the main thing is the Germans' matchmaking was the exclusive privilege of the men, they didn't have a matchmaker among women at all. As a matchmakers among Catholics were godfathers. Usually, it happens on Fridays. In many cases, matchmaking was carried out at nights in order to avoid wide publicity in case of rejection. Having come into the house, the matchmakers begin to praise the bride and her parents for their good upbringing and to express their wishes for the girl to marry a good guy. The answer, as a rule, was given immediately, and if it was positive, they treated the matchmakers. In case of refusal, the matchmakers received an empty basket. Parents agreed if the daughter agreed as well. The next day, the bride and her parents are invited to the bridegroom's house for the miai. In Lutheran, , the bride and groom with their parents met once again at the groom's house in order to discuss the material side of the wedding. After reaching an agreement, preparations for the wedding started.

At present, matchmaking is formal, as young people decide their own destiny⁸. However, 73.0% of respondents noted that parents themselves participate in the ritual of matchmaking whereas 21.6% believe that relatives and friends are in the role of matchmakers.

Today, as is the custom, the parents of young guy visit the brides' home in order to ask her hand to their son. In Tashkent, usually, young people acquaint parents with their dearies, and then, depending on the further relations, parents agree on the wedding: date, expenses, dowry, residence of the young family.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, at traditional German weddings young people were married in churches. In the 1920-1930s could live without signings or register a week after the wedding. The wedding was mostly held on Sundays after the divine service and usually several couples were married at the same time. In the Soviet period this was not adhered due to the anti-religious policy in the country. After independence, national and religious traditions began to revive in Uzbekistan. But even now not all are getting married in the church. To the question whether religious marriage registration is carried out 2.6% of the respondents answered – always, 7.7% – often, 33.3% – sometimes, but 56.4% answered that they were not.

The attitude of the German older generation to civil marriages is twofold. Some people passing themselves through civil marriage perceive it as a given, since the Germans had no civil rights until 1956, and accordingly, their marriages were not registered, mixed ones were equated to marriage with foreigners. Most of children of that generation were already adopted in the 60s by their fathers after the conclusion of a formal marriage between the parents. Therefore, part of the older generation treats civil marriages negatively, as if not wanting the repeating of their fate with their children. For middle-aged people, it was quite common to have a formal marriage in connection with the birth of a child (although the wedding could have been held without marriage registration)⁹. Despite the fact that today, 20.5% of respondents from the German diaspora treat civil marriages positively, 38.5% are negative and 41.0% are

⁷ Author's recordings

⁸ Author's recordings

⁹ Author's recordings

neutral, 79.5% of respondents consider registration as a mandatory, 15.4% – optional and only 5.1% consider it as a desirable.

Till nowadays the features of national culture has not been preserved in the family rituals of the Germans in Tashkent. The influence of the traditions of the ethnic groups that surrounded the German diaspora was very strong. The number of nationally mixed families has greatly increased. Mixed marriages are a clear indicator of the weakening of the former insularity of local German groups. Now young people enter into marriage whose parents belonged to different faiths, even different nationalities, godparents might be people of different nationalities and different faiths, which in the past was completely unacceptable. Tashkent's Germans have virtually erased confessional frontiers between Catholics and Lutherans.

Today, the Germans are almost dissolved and assimilated in the multicultural environment. Most of the remaining Germans in Uzbekistan are children of mixed marriages for whom their own ethnocultural identification is also very complicated issue. In Tashkent there are no places of compact residence of the Germans, they live in tandem with representatives of other nations which does not contribute to the preservation of their ethnocultural environment.

2. CONCLUSION

In our opinion, the factors and transformational processes in the ritual sphere of the Germans can be associated with the development of the institute of family, which is privy to all events around it and acts as a data carrier on various elements of culture. The sharp increase in the number of interethnic marriages (primarily with Russians) struck the family as the custodian of wedding ceremonies and customs. In most cases, the German rites ceased to be followed, there was a transition to the Russian version of ceremonies.. An important feature was that the custodians of knowledge about the traditional ritual culture in nationally mixed families were the representatives of the older generation, namely, its female part. For example, among German mixed families women are more conservative than men, who are more likely to interethnic marriages¹⁰.

In recent decades, the German population of Uzbekistan has been in active contact with themselves and with people of other nationalities (Russians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Koreans), which leads to a more intensive development of ethnic processes among the Germans. The interpersonal interaction of these two peoples contributes to the process of unifying of the German culture with the culture of the Russian population. As a result, specific traditional forms of German culture are replacing by mass forms of cultures.

Currently, neither religion nor nationality is of decisive importance when entering into marriage. Today more than half of the marriages concluded by the Germans are nationally mixed marriages, mostly with Russians.

The available ethnographic material makes it possible to state the fact that the pre-wedding rituals of the Germans are fairly a rather complex phenomenon. The internal logic of development and almost continuous migrations of this ethnic community over the centuries led to the disappearance of traditions and the emergence of modern forms borrowed from other cultures, pagan and Christian ideas in the wedding ceremony.

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